

Exemplar Precis

Group 1: 'There was a lot of learning going on' Using a digital medium to support learning in a professional course for new HE lecturers.

This paper provides a highly practical example of researching student participation. Also, it utilises Action Research, an approach which there was a lot of interest in at our residential. The paper discusses a programme that many of us in a UK HEI would be aware of, a Postgraduate Certificate in Education within the Higher Education sector. The assessment rationale was to introduce students to the e-learning tools that they could expect to encounter in their working lives. A patchwork assessment approach is described, and whilst patchworks can be created with nothing more than a word processor, Personal Learning Systems (PLS) are ideally suited for this approach, allowing links to be made within, and outside the constraints of the environment.

The research methodology, as already mentioned, was Action Research, but with a 'twist' of using Appreciative Inquiry (AI) within the framework. This was a new one on me, and relates to a '4-D' Cycle of AI: (1) Discovery, (2) Dream, (3) Design, and (4) Destiny. So we now have an AI cycle within an AR cycle... This could become unmanageable until we note that this study was over a two-year period, and the sample size for the online survey and subsequent focus groups was small. One quirk reported in the findings was that there was a 73% response rate to the survey in year one, but this plummeted to just 19% in year two - this is reported, but no reason for this is given, which seems to be a major omission.

The findings have been written as a number of 'Themes'.

- Theme 1 - Initial hostility and subsequent acceptance of the use of the e-portfolio within the cohorts.
- Theme 2 - Enthusiasm for the peer review and feedback process.
- Theme 3 - Using the patchwork approach for assessment, which was overwhelmingly positive apart from constraints of word count (sound familiar?)

Though the findings are presented in a way which we don't find easy to separate out concerns, the conclusion is much clearer, tying back to the AI cycle that was used as the methodology.

- *Discovery* - the mandatory online activities, though resisted by some, provided an important experience for the 'educators of the future'. The use of patchwork assessment was also positively reported on, the limiting word count reported offering "a challenge in developing succinctness of expression".
- *Dream and Design* - In this section the authors report student anxiety in providing peer feedback, and part of the reflection on the process is providing training on providing formative feedback. The tutor's workload is also noted here, which I personally encountered when attempting to encourage reflection throughout the delivery of a module a few years back with over 100 students.
- *Destiny* - Looking to the future, the authors want to extend the use of the patchwork beyond the use of text. There is an interesting quote in this section that I want to use to prompt a question below...

Overall we found this an accessible and readable paper. Whilst there may be a tendency to oversell the findings given the small sample size, there's a pragmatic approach within the paper which is refreshing.

The penultimate paragraph in the paper quotes Barnett (2007) questioning if "assessment can promote six qualities of a student's educational being, namely "courage, bravery, determination, persistence, integrity and sincerity" (p. 33).

Question:

Are there any additional qualities that we aspire to, both as students on this programme, and that we look from our students in their learning?

References

- Barnett, R. (2007). Assessment in higher education: An impossible mission? In D. Boud & N. Falchikov (Eds.), *Rethinking assessment in higher education – learning for the longer term* (pp. 29-40). London: Routledge.
- Chesney, S., & Marcangelo, C. (2010). 'There was a lot of learning going on' Using a digital medium to support learning in a professional course for new HE lecturers. *Computers & Education*, **54**, 3, 701–708. DOI:10.1016/j.compedu.2009.09.027